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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 007588

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#) [AUC](#)

SUBJECT: PARAMILITARY DEMOBILIZATION UPDATE

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) In early August, three more paramilitary blocs demobilized, bringing the total number of demobilized paramilitaries to over 8,700 since 2003. The Liberators of the South demobilized 676 members, the Heroes of Granada demobilized 2,033, and the Self-Defense Forces of Meta and Vichada demobilized 200. During the process, all paramilitaries from the three blocs went through the numerous mandatory registration steps, including being checked through the Department of Administrative Security (DAS, rough FBI equivalent) database for pending arrest warrants, giving DNA swabs, fingerprints, dental records, and photos to the Prosecutor General's Technical Investigative Corp (CTI), and being entered into the government's electronic tracking and monitoring system. According to the GOC, senior AUC commander "Don Berna" has now demobilized all his troops, which he had pledged to do in June after turning himself in to authorities for murdering a local government official. Almost 6,000 members of the Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB), the largest and most powerful single AUC bloc, are scheduled to begin demobilizing in September, along with the remaining other blocs. End Summary.

Liberators of the South

2. (U) On July 30, 676 members of the Liberators of the South demobilized in a public ceremony in a recreation center in Taminango municipality, Narino Department. The bloc turned over 593 weapons total, including 419 rifles and 70 pistols. This was the first of several groups that make up the BCB, the single largest and most powerful paramilitary bloc left to demobilize. The demobilization had been postponed several times because the local community reacted with strong fear of guerrilla attacks. The Security and Democracy Foundation, an independent and well-respected think tank, has warned that the FARC will likely try to retake valuable drug cultivation and transportation areas lost to the AUC in 2000. The Liberators of the South operated in prime drug trafficking territory and was involved in trafficking off the Pacific coast.

Heroes De Granada

3. (C) On August 1, 2,033 members of the AUC's Heroes of Granada demobilized in San Roque, Antioquia Department outside of Medellin. This was the largest bloc demobilization ever. Emboffs observed the concentration and registration phase prior to the ceremony, which was military-like in its organization. All 2,033 paramilitaries fulfilled the mandatory registration steps, including being identified, photographed, fingerprinted, and entered into the tracking and monitoring system. About two thirds of the troops had operated in rural areas outside of Medellin and appeared in uniform while the urban militia had operated in the city of Medellin and appeared in civilian clothes. The bloc turned over 1,123 weapons total, including 454 rifles and five machine guns. GOC officials present during the demobilization told emboffs the weapons were not nearly as high-quality as weapons turned in by other blocs.

4. (C) Senior AUC commander Diego Murrillo ("Don Berna") controlled the bloc and was present during the demobilization under heavy government supervision. His arrival was cheered and saluted by his troops. The open allegiance shown to him suggests that the troops had not been recruited off the streets of Medellin to pose as paramilitaries, as speculated in the media. Berna and Peace Commissioner Restrepo announced that the Heroes of Granada was Berna's last bloc to demobilize and that he no longer had any paramilitaries under his control. Earlier, Berna was said to be in control of the still un-demobilized Pacific Bloc. Now, however, government officials involved in demobilization report that the Pacific Bloc was demobilized piecemeal by sending members to other bloc demobilizations, such as the Liberators of the South. What remains of the Pacific Bloc is not under Berna's control, according to the government.

Meta and Vichada

15. (U) On August 6, approximately 200 members of the Self-Defense Forces of Meta and Vichada demobilized on a private farm in Puerto Gaitan municipality, Meta Department. The bloc is part of several paramilitary groups operating in the eastern plains, including the still active Centauros Bloc, which splintered when its commander, Miguel Arroyave, was killed last year.

More To Come

16. (C) Over 8,700 paramilitaries have demobilized collectively since 2003. Several blocs still remain, including the BCB. The BCB has between 5,000 to 6,000 members and had originally demanded numerous concentration zones to demobilize all its units simultaneously. After negotiating with the BCB commanders, the GOC now plans to demobilize the bloc in three zones on three different dates. Restrepo has repeatedly warned that the GOC will be hard pressed to complete all the upcoming demobilizations before the end of 2005 without additional resources for expanded logistical needs.

WOOD